Samuel, F., & Hatleskog, E. (2020). Why Social Value? *Architectural Design*, *90*(4), 6-13. https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2584

Why Social Value?

As societies face impending challenges relating to climate change, densification and social upheaval, now is an opportune moment to discuss what we value most and how architects and architecture can play a role in improving people's lives. If architects are to reverse their current trajectory into the margins of an increasingly 'lean' and economically driven construction sector, it is important to reflect on the value of architectural design. This issue of 2 explores the meaning and potential of social value as an instrument of change in the built environment. It includes a range of case studies from across the globe of architects who are developing methodologies for creating, measuring and mapping social value, arguably the most intangible and important impact of architectural activity. The first two articles, by Karen Kubey (pp 14–21) and Peter Sattrup (pp 22–9), provide important contextual reviews of the social value scene in the US and Denmark, respectively. The following contributions explore the mapping and measuring of the social value of communities using different methodologies and media that converge on its cultural dimension, and the concluding articles act as a timely reminder that social value is a neoliberal construct that does not necessarily translate to authentic cultures of respect and love.

Valuation

'If we cannot define what we mean by value, we cannot be sure to produce it, nor to share it fairly, nor to sustain economic growth.'[1] The economist Mariana Mazzucato provides a compelling critique of valuation practices across the globe, making an important distinction between value creation (for example, the work of the public sector for public good) and value extraction (financial gain from the trading of stocks and shares). 'Value' is a contradictory word. Like the architectural concept of 'transparency', it can be a tool for accountability and inclusion, but also a medium of control. Where value is mentioned, audit follows, and this always begins with classification – a 'powerful' technology that is both 'political and ethical'.[2]

While architects have a cultural aversion to seeing themselves as an increment of economic gain, they create value that they very often fail to record or capture. Until this value is expressed in a format that can be fed into policy and procurement, it will remain invisible and ignored, leaving economic value the sole dominant currency of built environment transactions. Though definitions may be limiting, they are necessary at this point in time to 'externalise' and make known the knowledge of architects.

Design value is widely accepted to be the sum of environmental, economic and social value,[3] in other words the commonly used 'triple bottom line' of sustainability. While environmental value is generally measured in embodied and operational carbon (sometimes with the addition of biodiversity), and there are existing practices (albeit flawed) for measuring economic value, there are no agreed measures of social value.

Defining Social Value

Geoffrey C Bowker and Susan Leigh Star note in their book *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (1999) that orderings are always culturally and temporally specific and therefore need to be constantly under review. They call for a new form of information science that mixes 'formal and folk classifications'.[4] Such is the ordering that is posited here. Social value has much in common with 'resilience', which can be understood as a transformative condition that allows us not only to adapt, but also to transform and reinvent our society towards a more balanced, more equitable way of living on Earth.

It is difficult to say what social value is, but you know it when you see it. For the purposes of this 2, it is understood to relate to the wellbeing generated through the procurement of buildings and places, sometimes quantified. It has five overlapping dimensions. The first is the creation of jobs and apprenticeships, the version that has become a standard requirement of procurement in the UK and tends to be quite a blunt, tickbox-type exercise. Filling in the social value section in pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQs) and invitations-to-tender (ITTs) in the UK takes considerable expertise, experience and time, which is why larger organisations are often better at it, ironically excluding the smaller companies that social value legislation was designed to protect.

It is important for construction teams to create jobs and training that deliver widespread long-term benefits to an area, both economic and social, as can be seen in Li Wan and Edward Ng's article on the benefits of utilising local technologies within village communities in China (pp 74–81). Similarly, Irena Bauman and Kerry Harker (pp 38–45) chart the development of Built InCommon, a network of neighbourhood-owned fabrication workshops designed to promote widespread innovation at a local scale.This is also a powerful theme in Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou's discussion of atelier d'architecture autogérée's R-Urban strategy (pp 30–37).

The second dimension of social value is the wellbeing generated by the design of a building or place – connecting inhabitants, promoting freedom and flexibility, encouraging positive emotions (for example, through exposure to nature) and meaningful engagement by allowing people a say in the design of their environments. The third dimension is the learning generated through construction. Jateen Lad's Sharanam project outside Pondicherry in India (pp 82–7) provides an exemplar of how communities can be involved in construction, acquiring new skills while creating a building that works well environmentally and facilitates contact with the natural environment.

Fourthly, there is social value in the learning that takes place when local people are involved in the design of their environment. Building a building should be a relationship, not an affair – an evocative metaphor delivered by the Grangetown community about a Community Asset Transfer bowls pavilion project in Cardiff, Wales, as discussed by Mhairi McVicar in her article (pp 46–51). It is not just about the building though; the real asset being transferred is the knowledge and confidence to make change, which is a two-way street between the community and the professional team.

As well as assisting with the design of their built structures, communities are increasingly also being involved in their construction. Building collectively was once

traditional, and still is in some parts of the world. This empowering experience has been locked into the curriculum of architecture students at the University of Reading in Berkshire, UK. Their Urban Room, developed with Invisible Studio architects, was realised in 2019 and longlisted for the RIBA MacEwen Award for 'architecture for the common good'. Made as a temporary art venue, it was later dismantled and rebuilt in the grounds of a local primary school.

The last, much neglected dimension of social value is the benefit of building with local materials and typologies, and in doing so creating local jobs. Going against the grain of legislation and procurement, this is something that UK-based practice ADAM Architecture works hard to achieve, for example in their Nansledan ongoing extension to the town of Newquay in Cornwall.

What, then, is the appropriate response for an architect when a community values things other than architecture? This issue is problematised by Anthony Hoete in his article on the Ma¯ ori *whare* (house) (pp 112–19), and is a conundrum faced by Mat Hinds in his contribution on the design of the Krakani lumi centre for eco-tourism in the cultural homelands of the palawa-pakana, the first peoples of lutruwita (Tasmania) (pp 120–27).

Capturing Social Value

The UK policy context is an exemplar of why social value is growing in traction in governments across the world. Since the advent of the Social Value Act 2012 and the Future Wellbeing of Generations (Wales) Act 2015, it has been gaining significance as a requirement of procurement, contracts and planning in the public sector.[5] Commonly expressed as the social value of the process and not the product, there is, however, growing consensus on the wellbeing impact of design and placemaking,[6] particularly now that 'social prescribing' is becoming such an integral part of National Health Service activity.[7] COVID-19 has brought the impact of places and the way they are designed into relief.

Organisations such as the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) have been developing social value proxies for use by housing associations and local authorities to collect information on their portfolios, but as yet there are no mechanisms to capture the social value of design specifically, or to consider how it might be captured spatially. This is why independent research organisation Social Life's work on evaluating neighbourhood wellbeing, as discussed in Nicola Bacon and Paul Goodship's article (pp 60–67), is so significant.

The Social Value Toolkit for Architecture, developed bottom-up by the University of Reading with the London-based Research Practice Leads (RPL) group and published by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), is the first to offer architects a methodology for the monetisation of social value through the use of social return on investment (SROI), a technique that is gaining considerable traction across the UK and beyond.[8]

Post-occupancy evaluation (POE), returning to a building or place after it has been in use to find out how well it is performing, rarely happens, but is crucial for the measuring and mapping of intangible impacts such as social value, as well as the more tangible, for example energy performance. The boundaries between POE, conservation and history are blurred in Aoibheann Ní Mhearáin and Tara Kennedy's insightful study of St Brendan's, a 1960s community school in Ireland (pp 94–103).That the issue of scale is important can also be seen from Ayona Datta and Nabeela Ahmed's examination of gender safety and public infrastructure in the city of Thiruvananthapuram in India using participatory techniques as well as crowdsourced mapping to create a rich and inclusive account of women's experiences (pp 104–11).

New technologies, if used in an ethical and critical way, are set to make the capturing of social value much easier in the near future. There has been a surge of interest in data across research-led architecture practices in the last year. Jenni Montgomery's discussion of Greenkeeper, a pioneering digital platform that uses mobile phone data to monitor the usage of green space, provides an important illustration of a new type of innovation that is taking place in practice (pp 68–73). In her article, not only does Cristina Garduño Freeman chart social media traffic to measure the impact of the Sydney Opera House on Australia's identity, culture and economy, she also forensically captures the cumulative impact of stuff, the millions of fridge magnets, tea towels, bags and ephemera that celebrate its image across the globe (pp 88–93).

Why is Social Value Important?

Categorisation, the clustering of information, is the infrastructure of our 'built moral environment'.[9] Setting to one side the obvious ethical imperative to make buildings that are good for people (and by implication the planet), there are some important practical reasons to define and measure change in social value quantitively as well as qualitatively in an increasingly data-driven environment. We need to find ways to capture intangible impacts or they will not figure in future city models, BIM, parametric design, the assessment of project bids, the calculation of insurance premiums or outcomes-based building procurement in the delivery.[10] A multitude of tools are emerging within other disciplines to assist with this process, several of which are discussed in this issue, but it would be better if architecture could develop its own, to avoid becoming marginalised from the debate altogether. Leadership is urgently needed to communicate the role they play in generating social value in the built environment.

Notes

1. Mariana Mazzucato, The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy, Allen Lane (London), 2018, p xix.
2. Geoffrey C Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences, MIT Press (Cambridge, MA), 1999.
3. Bilge Serin et al, Design Value at the Neighbourhood Scale, UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, 19 November 2018: http://housingevidence.ac.uk/ publications/design-value-at-the-neighbourhood-scale/.
4. Bowker and Leigh Star, op cit.
5. UK Green Building Council, Driving Social Value in New Development: Options for Local Authorities, 2019: www.ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ UKGBC-Driving-social-value-in-new-development-Options-for-local-authorities-1. pdf.
6. Design Council and Social Change UK, Healthy Placemaking, April 2018: www. designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/Healthy_Placemaking_ Report.pdf.

7. NHS England, Healthy by Design: The Healthy New Towns Network Prospectus, 2018: www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/healthy-by-design- healthy-new-towns-network-prospectus.pdf.
8. Flora Samuel et al, Social Value Toolkit for Architecture, Royal Institute of British Architects (London), 2020: www.architecture.com/knowledge-and- resources/resources-landing-page/social-value-toolkit.
9. Bowker and Leigh Star, op cit, p 32.
10. Flora Samuel, Why Architects Matter: Evidencing and Communicating the Value of Architects, Routledge (London), 2018.